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Qadhafi Urges Syrian Annexation Of Lebanon to End Factional Feuds

By GERALD F. SEIB

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

SABHA, Libya—Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi, in his annual foreign policy address, called on Syria to "annex" Lebanon to solve that country's factional feuding.

Col. Qadhafi, in a rambling, two-hour address in this desert town, also threatened violence against other Arab nations that don't heed his regular calls to form a political union spanning the whole Arab world. If Arab leaders don't respond to his appeal, Col. Qadhafi declared, "then confrontations and violence will begin."

The Libyan leader made the remarks at a Sunday night rally organized to mark the 16th anniversary of the revolution he led to overthrow former King Idris. But while threatening violence against other Arab states generally, Col. Qadhafi didn't discuss current tensions between Libya and two of his neighbors, Egypt and Tunisia.

Libya has dismissed an estimated 27,000 Tunisian and 15,000 Egyptian workers in recent weeks, Western diplomats say, largely because of an economic pinch created by slumping oil prices. But Tunisia and Egypt, which have had relations with Libya anyway, charge that Col. Qadhafi is using the expulsions for political purposes as well. They assert that Libya is sending the workers home abruptly in hopes they will create internal problems for Egypt and Tunisia, which will be hard pressed to find work for them.

Indeed, Col. Qadhafi himself told Libyans in a separate statement yesterday that the decision to dismiss foreign workers was a political one rather than a step taken because of "economic pressures."

As the war of words between Libya and its neighbors escalates, Tunisia is charging that Libya has moved troops to the two countries' border, an assertion that Western diplomats here doubt. One of Egypt's government-owned newspapers yesterday asserted that some Libyan officers have refused to carry out orders to move to the Tunisian border or fly over it and have been arrested for insubordination.

But there weren't any signs of problems in the military at the rally where Col. Qadhafi gave his speech. Security wasn't tight, and a small group of invited foreign journalists were allowed to casually gather around and briefly talk to Col. Qadhafi, who was resplendent in a well tailored khaki uniform.

The speech contained his usual acidic denunciations of Israel, which he called "the racist nuclear state," and the U.S., which he said had sent "dirty" intelligence agents to subvert Libya. But his call for Syria to exert more control over Lebanon was new. "We fully support Syria to annex Lebanon in a unionist manner," he said. "We will leave the Lebanese factions and the Lebanese problem for the direct attention of Syria."

The Libyan leader's use of the word "unionist" to describe the annexation suggested he was advocating more a friendly merger of the two countries than a strong-armed Syrian takeover. And he warned that the merger shouldn't take place over the "bodies" of Palestinians, an implicit criticism of the attacks some Syrian-backed militias have launched on Beirut Palestinian camps to extend their control of the city.

But his call fit into his broader message that Libya will start pushing for Arab unity by "force and revolution." Col. Qadhafi has long maintained that Arabs will be able to stand up to Israel and drive out American influence when they form a political union. And he has blamed Egypt and other Arab nations with good ties to the U.S. for blocking his dream of a united Arab nation without "phony" borders.